

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

MAY 13, 2013

7:00 p.m.

Lincoln Center

PRESENT: Atwater, Crockett, Hagenow, Leon, Luxenberg, Pattacini,
Scappaticci, Walton

ALSO PRESENT: Interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kisiel, Assistant to the
Superintendent for Finance & Management Brooks, Assistant
Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services Matfess

ABSENT: Cruz

A. OPENING

A.1&2. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Chairperson Pattacini.

A.3 ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

**ADOPTED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of
Education of April 22, 2013.**

**Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the
motion.**

8/0 – Voted in favor.

A.4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF BUDGET WORKSHOP

**ADOPTED – Minutes Budget Workshop of the Board of
Education of May 1, 2013.**

**Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the
motion.**

8/0 – Voted in favor.

A.5. ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING

ADOPTED – Minutes Special Meeting of the Board of Education of May 1, 2013.

Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

8/0 – Voted in favor.

B. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT – PART I

B.1. Racial Balance Plan Report/Proposal

Dr. Kisiel welcomed Michael Zuba, an Associate with Milone & MacBroom. Dr. Kisiel reviewed that previously the Board of Education had approved a Racial Balance Plan that was approved by the State in 2011. That plan had included adding several preschool programs to the district. Due to the closing of Nathan Hale School last year, redistricting was used instead to achieve balance in the district and meet the state law requirements. Later tonight Dr. Kisiel will be asking for action on this proposed new plan to submit to the State for approval.

Mr. Zuba presented a Power Point, which is available for viewing in full on the website. Mr. Zuba noted that there are currently no imbalanced elementary schools in the district. He reviewed the redistricting that happened with the closing of Nathan Hale, as well as potential pocket redistricting that is a possibility if needed in the future.

Dr. Kisiel reviewed that this topic is listed under new business this evening and will be voted on to send to the State Department of Education for approval. Dr. Kisiel reiterated that the pocket redistricting is only a possibility in the future if some schools become imbalanced or are pending imbalance, but is not necessary currently. Mr. Zuba added that numbers are reported to the state October 1, 2013 and the State would not send a letter addressing any imbalance until May 2014.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Dr. Kisiel presented four items on the Consent Calendar for Board approval.

C.1. Personnel Action

Details had already been provided to the Board members in their agenda folders.

C.2. Transfer of Funds

Details had already been provided to the Board members in their agenda folders.

- Transfer from Bennet Middle School CI Field/Athletic Trips to Bennet Middle School Administrator General Supplies/Materials in the amount of \$3,000.
- Transfer from Illing Middle School Administrator Postage to Illing Middle School Administrator General Supplies/Materials in the amount of \$1,000.
- Transfer from Bennet Middle School Administrator Professional Development to Bennet Middle School Administrator General Supplies/Materials in the amount of \$3,000.
- Transfer from Bowers Elementary School Administrator Office Supplies/Materials to Bowers Elementary School Contracted Kelly Substitute Professional Development Account in the amount of \$250.

C.3. Extended Field Trip Request – Manchester High School – Student Leadership Conference – Stonehill College, Easton, MA from July 16 to July 19, 2013 – 6 students

C.4. Extended Field Trip Request – Illing Middle School – Odyssey of the Mind World Finals – Michigan State University from May 22 to May 26, 2013 – 7 students

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the recommendation to adopt Item C in the agenda, the Consent Calendar.

DISCUSSION:

Ms. Walton questioned the Odyssey of the Mind trip for World Finals, wondering if the Board was funding the chaperones for the team. Mrs. Brooks stated the Board was paying for the two teachers to accompany the students, as they have done in the past.

Mr. Pattacini announced there are two fundraisers in the works for Odyssey of the Mind: May 15th CW Chops & Catch is donating 15% of the lunch and dinner receipts to the group, and on May 17th a pasta dinner is being held at Illing at 6:00 p.m.

The question was called.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

D. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, noted that Memorial Day is approaching, May 27, 2013. He reviewed that at the end of July is the 60th anniversary of the end of the Korean Conflict, adding that South Korea has their first female president. Mr. Stringfellow hopes that part of the world gets better. He notes Memorial Day is a day to remember all veterans, both living and dead. As a labor union member, Mr. Stringfellow recommended the book *Labor Rising* and feels teaching about unions should be part of the curriculum. Mr. Stringfellow felt Mr. Zuba's report was good. He recommended several articles in *Education Digest*, as well as documentaries on the importance of education and the culture of crime. He also pointed out the May edition of *Connecticut Magazine* had an article on children with rare diseases.

E. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART II

E.1. Keeney School Improvement Plan

Dr. Kisiel introduced Julie Martin-Beaulieu, the new principal at Keeney. He noted that previously Ms. Martin was an assistant principal at the Museum Academy in Hartford and an assistant principal in Washington state. Ms. Martin presented a power point on Keeney's School Improvement Plan, which is available on the website.

Mr. Leon thanked Ms. Martin for her presentation and noted he had seen positive research regarding looping. He wondered how the school plans to identify students that may not fit well with their teacher, and therefore shouldn't loop. Ms. Martin noted that in the classes that will loop the parents were given the option to opt out of the looping. She further noted that only two families in Kindergarten and one family in 4th grade opted out of looping.

Ms. Walton feels the presentation gave her a good understanding of what is happening at Keeney, but she feels Ms. Martin undersold her data. She notes there is no achievement gap between the Hispanic students and the district and in fact Keeney is out-performing the district. Ms. Walton noted that in comparing our scores to state average we are looking at averages from Hartford to Simsbury. While there is still room for growth, she feels that the data across all categories is excellent. Ms. Martin noted that sometimes when we talk about the achievement gap we forget we are talking about children and their goal at Keeney is to grow those students to extraordinary levels of performance.

Mr. Scappaticci welcomed Ms. Martin and noted he is a former Keeney student. He was interested in the staff vs. student connections data.

Mr. Pattacini had a question on Slide 12, the Science Benchmark at Goal or above. It was noted the number represents the difference from Fall to

Winter benchmarks. Mr. Pattacini also had a question on Slide 16, wondering if it was possible to see and compare the test scores for those students that feel they do not have an adult connection. Ms. Martin noted that is the next step. She notes some Keeney students performs at a high level on some assessments, but feels it may not be how high they can be. She believes the instructional rounds data around rigor will help give a better indication of what extraordinary levels can be seen at Keeney. She further states that the NWEA data will help reflect more the high levels.

E.2. MAPS (Manchester Agencies Police & Schools) Collaborative and Alliance District "School Community Collaboration" Update

Dr. Kisiel noted that two and a half years ago an initiative was born in Manchester to bring together the schools, police, other town agencies, and other social agencies, in order to address issues around climate, relationships, the number of arrests in schools, and to find out what we need to do in the district to establish a collaborate effort to respond to a whole range of a variety of student needs and data that reflects our concerns about our students, not only how they are performing, but how they are behaving and the overall climate in the school district.

The MAPS collaborative has changed dramatically over the past two years. Dr. Kisiel introduced Erica Bromley, the Director of the Youth Service Bureau, and Heidi Macchi, the District Outreach Social Worker and Community Coordinator. The two women presented a Power Point outlining MAPS and what fits under that umbrella. Ms. Bromley reviewed that the mission of MAPS is to create a systemic approach to help children succeed by reducing school-based arrests, suspensions, expulsions, and discipline referrals through collaborative partnership and facilitation of intervention initiatives. The full presentation is available on the web site.

Mr. Scappaticci wondered if the new SWIPE attendance system at MHS has been helpful. Ms. Macchi stated they definitely know earlier who is struggling with attendance. They are now able to address those issues sooner. Ms. Bromley noted they can also track the trends easier as well with the SWIPE system. This helps with intervention.

Ms. Walton thanked Ms. Bromley and the Youth Service Bureau for sticking with this initiative through the transition of a new administration. Ms. Walton noted that Ms. Bromley is quite the "guru" at the state level in terms of results-based accountability. Ms. Walton asked about the DMC. Ms. Bromley stated that with the data coming in a new system is being tweaked to track that data.

Ms. Walton wondered, in moving forward, what is MAPS "ask" in the next 1-2 years in terms of data. Ms. Bromley notes they would like to look at

standardizing school based and police based data, as they are currently looked at in different ways.

Mr. Pattacini questioned students being on a waiting list. Ms. Macchi reviewed that with the addition of a Substance Abuse Counselor there were 30-40 referrals within weeks and with only one counselor, they had to pull back and look at which kids were the most at-need and which kids could utilize other interventions at a school level. The School Safe Center also has a small capacity because those YSB staff perform in-home visits. She hopes to grow the staff in the future to address these needs.

Mr. Pattacini wondered when we would have outcome measures in place to review that data. Ms. Bromley stated they should have some preliminary numbers for the school review board this year, but more fully in the next school year.

Mr. Pattacini asked about funds for increasing the staff. Ms. Macchi noted that they will be submitting a proposal for a request for Alliance Grant funds. She reviewed that currently they have two full-time and 3 part-time outreach staff.

Mr. Pattacini notes MAPS works with the high school and Illing and wonders if they will be moving further down the grades. Ms. Macchi reviewed that there is TRACK and mentoring happening at the elementary level. Play by the Rules is also being started in the elementary schools and they are reaching out to the elementary schools on discipline issues. Ms. Bromley added that different buildings have different needs so they are trying to determine what can be rolled out to meet the elementary needs across the town and individualized for each building's needs.

E.3. SMARTR Committee Update

Mr. Crockett, who is the Chair of the SMARTR Committee, reviewed that last Thursday SMARTR had met with the architects. The recommendation that came forth from that meeting was to put the Cheney/Bennet project up for referendum in November and hold back on the Washington and Robertson projects for a future referendum.

Dr. Kisiel noted he had spoken with the town manager, Scott Shanley, regarding the rationale for this proposal. One issue is that if Cheney is approved and the 5th grades are moved, it creates an imbalance in enrollment in some schools and we may need to fill in with some redistricting. This affects future building design. Dr. Kisiel notes that Washington and Robertson are being planned as approximately 400 pupil schools and that is all based on projected enrollments. The State Department of Education may not approve the project if the numbers are not clear.

Dr. Kisiel further stated that if the community does not support the Cheney project, then it won't support any project. He notes that SMARTR will continue to work to move forward on the other projects in a timely fashion.

Mr. Leon states he is disappointed by this. He notes a year and a half ago the Board reviewed \$23 million in deficiencies in our buildings and this plan does nothing to change the outcome of those deficiencies. Mr. Leon notes the last referendum gave \$4.9 million towards those needs, but that the list continues to grow. Mr. Leon states Washington needs a new school. Adding a building to the district with no time table for the other two schools is not something he will support.

Ms. Walton agreed with Mr. Leon. She noted that the SMARTR Committee had asked the Board of Education for a list of priorities previously. That list included Washington, Robertson, and Verplanck as priorities. She notes that previously the question of putting just one project forward was asked at SMARTR and she had opposed it based on those recommendations. She states that at the last SMARTR meeting, when three Board of Education members and the Superintendent were not at the meeting, this recommendation was made.

Mr. Pattacini asked if SMARTR had looked at what improvements would be necessary at Washington and Robertson in the short term. Mr. Crockett stated SMARTR is not charged with short-term, only long-term planning. Mr. Pattacini states it is an important component of this decision, to understand what critical repairs are needed at Washington and the need to address those concerns.

While the Cheney project would alleviate some capacity issues, Mr. Pattacini is concerned with moving forward without a recommendation in place to mitigate future problems.

Ms. Luxenberg had the opportunity to sit in at a SMARTR meeting last month. She felt at that time the group seemed to be in agreement on the plans for the three projects to move ahead. She does not understand what happened to change that plan from three projects to one. Mr. Crockett stated that some members felt making a November referendum was too hurried and there were questions that need to be addressed regarding finding the "sweet spot" of how many students would bring in the maximum state reimbursement on those projects. Some members felt the need to put the brakes on those projects in order to slow down long enough to get answers and in the meantime move forward with Cheney, which is the cornerstone of the projects. The town manager had asked for a recommendation to be made to the Boards.

Ms. Luxenberg felt concern with the “hurried” feel to the process. She notes that the discussion has been going on since last February (2012) and that the SMARTR Committee has met at least twice a month since then. Mr. Crockett notes they are still on the timetable that was outlined last summer. Ms. Luxenberg reviewed there have been about 30 meetings of SMARTR and she thinks the cornerstone of projects is the elementary schools, with Washington and Robertson being at the top of that list. Ms. Luxenberg wants to know when work would be done at Washington and Robertson. She feels the need to be sure those students receive the same priority level that students have at other schools in the district. She will not support the recommendation this evening.

Mr. Crockett noted that addressing the Critical Assessment List is not part of SMARTR’s charge. He notes they had hoped to overlap some of those needs by eliminating them due to construction. He also suggested we could aim for a Spring referendum on the elementary projects. Ms. Luxenberg replied that she had assumed this was a longer-term plan to shape the face of this district, and moving just Cheney forward does not do that.

Ms. Hagenow, a member of SMARTR, was not at the last meeting and was confused why Cheney would be moved ahead of crucial schools that are falling apart. She does not understand how optimum capacity and maximum reimbursement questions cannot be answered from the architects numbers. Mr. Crockett reviewed the estimated state reimbursement on those projects is currently approximately 50% and that it can be raised closer to 60% based on square footage per number of students. He noted that if Cheney fails, then the elementary schools will have to house K-5 and not K-4, as is the current plan, and what if Cheney fails, but Washington and Robertson pass? Then what? Mr. Crockett further stated that SMARTR has no authority to make decisions, they only make recommendations and he reminded the Board that a Spring referendum is certainly possible for Washington and Robertson.

Ms. Luxenberg noted that there are four Board of Education members on SMARTR and that at the last meeting three were absent, as well as Dr. Kisiel. She wondered if those members and Dr. Kisiel knew that a decision was to be made at that meeting? Mr. Crockett noted that SMARTR is just an advisory committee.

Mr. Leon stated the time to make this recommendation was prior to approving the plan to move ahead with schematic designs on these buildings. He wonders why the Board was encouraged to approve those designs – it makes no sense to him. He agrees SMARTR does not address the critical deficiencies in the district, however the thought process was taken into

consideration in holding off on some of the repairs that the \$4.9 million prior referendum covered in consideration of the Washington and Robertson projects, pending the next referendum. Now there may not be time to get those back on the schedule for this summer. He notes Washington is a priority, this Board said it was a priority, and now SMARTR is saying it is not a priority with this plan.

Ms. Walton stated that at the last SMARTR update Director Topping had asked what the Board of Education endorsed as he didn't want to waste SMARTR's time. There was a lengthy discussion that the Board of Education was not willing to do anything that did not include Washington School. At a previous SMARTR meeting the issue of moving forward just with Cheney was raised and Ms. Walton had adamantly opposed that on behalf of the Board of Education, as she knew the Board would not be in favor. She feels we have to discount this recommendation and fix this so we can move forward with both the Washington and Robertson projects.

Dr. Kisiel stated that based on the discussion it is clear the Board is unhappy with the SMARTR recommendation. He notes the Board needs to be very clear to SMARTR and the Board of Directors, whom he has heard is in favor of this recommendation, on the Board of Education's position for supporting a referendum that includes all three projects. Mr. Pattacini added, it might include two projects or three projects on the referendum, depending upon further discussion.

Mr. Pattacini asked if any decisions had been made on the schematics on the other two buildings? Mr. Crockett noted the schematic plans were still in the process of being completed. Mr. Crockett reviewed that the recommendation from SMARTR is to ask the Board of Directors to consider putting the Cheney project on the November referendum and hold the Washington and Robertson projects for a future referendum. Mr. Pattacini has a sense that the Board of Education is not prepared to move forward with this recommendation. He suggested discussing the guidance to be given to SMARTR. Mr. Pattacini reviewed the possible options:

- Reaffirm that the Board of Education would like to proceed with Cheney/Washington/Robertson as a single referendum.
- Proceed with Washington (which is critical) and Cheney, with Robertson being delayed.
- Consider delaying the elementary schools, but with a time frame specified, such as a Spring referendum.

Mr. Leon stated he is in favor of the package deal with all three projects. He notes this was supposed to be Phase I of many other projects, including Verplanck.

Mr. Atwater is also in favor of a 3 package proposal.

Mr. Scappaticci noted that while he is not in support of the redesign of Washington, he is in support of the three school deal as Washington is still a priority.

Mr. Pattacini notes if we reaffirm this as a package deal, it is possible nothing will get to referendum in November.

Ms. Walton notes there is a possibility even if we make it to referendum, that the projects won't pass, but she has faith in the voters. Ms. Walton notes that the Board's responsibility is to identify the priorities of the district and SMARTR put in the work to do that. She notes we are not the decision makers, and we need to trust in the voters.

Mr. Pattacini clarified he meant that there is the possibility that the question will not be ready for referendum in November, not that it wouldn't pass. Mr. Leon notes that if we are on schedule, which we are, then getting to referendum should not be an issue.

Dr. Kisiel reviewed that the referendum question has nothing to do with the reimbursement. SMARTR is wrestling with the question of managing a proposal that will get us to the maximum reimbursement on the projects. Redistricting due to moving grade 5 puts that question at doubt. Some members of SMARTR believe that we should wait until we get one is done and then reevaluate the district enrollment in the other schools.

Mr. Leon wondered if a vote was in order to pass back to SMARTR? Mr. Pattacini noted we have to provide guidance to SMARTR by reaffirming our priorities and expectations regarding a package referendum. Mr. Leon notes we had already done that in the past and that hasn't changed.

Dr. Kisiel stated that there is a recommendation made by SMARTR that is not in line with the Board's preferences. The Board has an obligation to restate your previous position of priorities and that SMARTR needs to hear that again.

Ms. Walton noted that we have let people know where we stand on priorities, but she would feel more comfortable endorsing all three projects together if she knew where the Board of Directors stood on the issue. She wondered if we can gain some consensus bilaterally between both Boards. Mr. Pattacini noted he could ask for guidance or a joint meeting to discuss this issue. Ms. Walton felt that would be timely and a good time to reconvene and revisit SMARTR's charge.

Ms. Luxenberg asked if we could recommend to the Board of Directors to put all three projects up for a Fall referendum. Mr. Pattacini noted that SMARTR has no authority and they are looking to us to affirm their decision or provide guidance in concert with the Board of Directors. Ms. Luxenberg wondered why we would not recommend to the Board of Directors as the Board of Education. Mr. Leon agrees with Ms. Luxenberg and does not want to skirt the recommendation to another Board.

Ms. Luxenberg moved for the Board of Education to recommend to the Board of Directors that the Washington, Robertson, and Cheney projects are put on a Fall referendum and that we request a joint meeting of the Board of Directors and the Board of Education be scheduled to discuss that. Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

8/0 – Voted in favor.

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

F.1. 2013-2014 Budget Adjustments

Dr. Kisiel reviewed that no Board member had asked for further information on the list of suggested budget reductions. He is requesting endorsement of the budget adjustments to the 2013-2-14 budget as recommended by the Superintendent.

Secretary Leon moved for the Board of Education to adopt the revised Board of Education budget as outlined by the administration for 2013-2014 with a total dollar amount of \$104,535,293. Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Pattacini thanked the administration and staff for their work this budget season. He also thanked the Board of Directors for their funding.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

G. NEW BUSINESS

G.1. Racial Balance Plan

Dr. Kisiel stated it is the recommendation of the administration that we adopt the Racial Balance Plan as presented this evening by our consultant and endorsed by the administration.

Secretary Leon moved for the Board of Education to adopt the Racial Balance Plan proposed by the administration for the purpose of filing with the State Board of Education and meeting the racial balance requirements of the state. Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

8/0 – Voted in favor.

H. COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Pattacini announced that the MHS Roundtable Singers are celebrating their 75th anniversary Monday evening with approximately 160 alumni performing at a free concert.

I. COMMITTEE REPORTS

I.1. Buildings & Sites Committee

Mr. Leon reviewed the last meeting was held on May 7th with Michael Crockett, Neal Leon, Pat Brooks, and Rich Ziegler in attendance. The committee met to discuss the Safety and Security Assessment Report and a draft of the estimated costs to complete the recommendations. After a lengthy discussion it was determined that additional information is required for a final estimate of costs report.

J. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Limited to items on tonight's agenda)

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, supports items 3 and 4 on the Consent Calendar. He hopes the fundraising for Odyssey of the Mind at Illing goes well. As for the Leadership Conference, he feels it is good to have youth involved. Mr. Stringfellow was impressed with Ms. Martin's presentation on Keeney and with her data regarding student connections with teachers. He recommended an article in the May *Education Digest* regarding classroom management, along with another article, *Teachers that Tell Their Stories*. Mr. Stringfellow would like a report from the teacher's union. He sees Mr. Mack here frequently taking notes and wonders why he does not speak. Next, Mr. Stringfellow spoke about an article in yesterday's *Courant* on how obesity effects student learning. He liked how the MAPS initiative looks at a holistic approach to the problem and not just locking up offenders. He notes we should look at students as a whole and really value equity. Mr. Stringfellow noted the May edition of *CT Magazine* had an article on the importance of Latinos, in voting and the impact they make.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

None.

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 9:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Neal Leon
Board Secretary